Boeing Awarded $136 Million Study Contract for NASA Space Launch Initiative

The Boeing Company has been awarded $136 million by NASA to study technology concepts that could eventually lead to a new generation reusable launch vehicle (RLV). The award is a multi-task study for the Second Generation RLV of NASA's new Space Launch Initiative (SLI).

NASA's SLI is a five-year, $4.8 billion, two-phased program to develop a reusable launch vehicle that will dramatically lower the cost of access to space while substantially increasing safety and reliability. Through this initiative, NASA is hoping to increase competition, utilize commercial capabilities, assure access to space, and design the next generation RLV with the ability to evolve as new mission needs emerge.

"Our Boeing team welcomes the opportunity to be at the threshold of this new initiative," said George Muellner, vice president and general manager of Boeing Phantom Works. "Phantom Works has tremendous experience in leveraging high technology across the enterprise, and with this new goal in our sights we plan to put our best people and processes in place to support SLI."

"We are extremely pleased about this announcement, and I can say with confidence that Boeing is well positioned to carry out the long range goals of NASA," said Ron Prosser, vice president Advanced Space and Communications for Boeing Phantom Works. "We have the experience and assets associated with our heritage to generate the technology required to assist NASA in meeting its future space flight needs."

Under Phase I of the Task, Boeing Phantom Works will study airframe, vehicle subsystems, operations and propulsion concepts that could lead to a series of cutting-edge alternative technologies for eventual application to a specific RLV design. The goal will be a vehicle at least 10 times more reliable, with crew survivability 100 times greater, and at a cost 10 times less than today's launch vehicles. Additional leap-ahead technologies include crew survival systems, advanced tanks and airframe structures, advanced propulsion and thermal protection systems.

"Our team is anxious to participate in this new era of space exploration," said Robert Schwanz, Boeing Space Launch Initiative, program manager. We've worked hard at developing a strategy to achieve the goals that NASA has set forth -- and now the wheels are in motion. We are poised and ready, and what we accomplish will set a new precedent for all modes of space transportation."

The SLI is being led by NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center with all NASA field centers also participating. In addition, the Air Force Research Laboratory and research and development facilities at nine U.S. Air Force bases are also participating in the SLI effort.

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For further information:
Erik Simonsen
562-797-5473
Dave Phillips
206-655-8021